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New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: The first speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Communities of Cape Verde, His Excellency Mr. Amilcar Spencer Lopes, on whom I now call.

Mr. Lopes (Cape Verde) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation*): It is with great pleasure that I convey to you, Mr. President, my congratulations on your election to guide the work of this session of the General Assembly. At the same time I extend congratulations to the country that you represent with such distinction. Your outstanding qualities guarantee a competent presidency, which will certainly contribute to the success of our work.

I should also like to express my special appreciation for the enlightened and committed leadership of your predecessor, Mr. Freitas do Amaral, who, in the course of the historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly, made an undeniable contribution to the continued progress of the United Nations.

I also take this opportunity to express the highest appreciation of my delegation for the vision, initiative and determination that have characterized the work of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in his pursuit of the noble objectives of our Organization. It is with pleasure that I reiterate here the support of my country for his re-election.

Cape Verde, being a small developing country that is particularly affected by drought and desertification, and without any means of defence, has every reason to place a great deal of hope in the success of the United Nations, particularly with respect to the fulfilment of the principles and the goals of its Charter, such as the promotion of peace and security, social and economic development, the protection and defence of the environment, human rights and international law.

But small countries are not the only ones looking to the United Nations with hope. In today's world, when interdependencies are increasing and globalization is spreading to a growing number of sectors of humankind's activity, the existence and the work of our Organization is becoming more and more indispensable to all nations of the globe.

Governments are, in fact, more clearly aware of the need for international forums in which, through accommodation, they can reach consensus and decide on global policies, strategies and actions that, increasingly, are in the interests of the whole planet.

However, no institution apart from the United Nations has the vocation or the capacity to respond to those needs, since, to a large extent, it is the architect of the international stage on which we are players today.

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Under the auspices of the United Nations many results have been achieved in the search for solutions to the problems that afflict humankind. Spectacular progress has allowed human beings to take giant steps in science and technology. Nevertheless, there are still huge challenges to overcome, so that the ideals of the founders of the United Nations may triumph all over the face of the Earth.

In reality, for many people peace is still a dream, and promises of the distribution of the dividends from the end of the cold war have become an illusion. Malnutrition, disease, illiteracy — the eternal partners of underdevelopment — still overpower nations, preventing them from developing to their full potential to the benefit of their populations. Similarly, in many countries human rights are flagrantly violated, women are marginalized, and children fall victim to maltreatment and exploitation. In other countries, ethnic groups are subject to persecution and systematic "cleansing".

At the same time, situations of tension, such as arms and drug trafficking, the internationalization of organized crime and an upsurge in terrorism, are becoming generalized.

But it is necessary to bear in mind that such phenomena, both because of their origin and impact, can be fought efficiently only if there is a firm, unequivocal commitment by all States to improve international cooperation and better utilize resources within the framework of the United Nations.

Cape Verde, due to its proximity to the Sahara desert, is particularly affected by ecological problems, since, like other countries of the Sahel, it faces continuous environmental degradation, which threatens the very survival of its population.

It is therefore natural for us to welcome with joy the adoption and entry into force of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, in particular its Regional Implementation Annex for Africa. The particular attention paid to Africa is clearly justified. This continent is, without the shadow of a doubt, the most affected by drought and the most threatened by the advance of desertification. The ecological balance of the African continent, one fourth of the area of the planet, is crucial to stabilize the environment as a whole.

For that reason, the efforts that need to be made to prevent the desert from spreading must be shared by the entire international community.

Cape Verde is therefore committed, together with other countries, to establishing an international mechanism with the aim of facilitating the implementation and financing of the projects and programmes of the aforementioned Convention. We stress the praiseworthy action, at the subregional level, of the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel in coordinating efforts to fight drought and desertification.

I should also like to underline the significant efforts made in this area at the national level in Cape Verde. The reforestation programme launched in the first years of my country's independence continues with the same vigour 20 years later, and the results achieved are encouraging. Since the programme was launched, the area covered has gone from 7,413 to nearly 181,275 acres. I must also highlight the major support given by Cape Verde's development partners, without which it would not be possible to maintain the reforestation programme at its current pace, which is satisfactory to all.

In spite of the success of this programme and of the efforts made, my country is still affected by the devastating consequences of drought. In fact, due to the lack of rainfall in July and the insufficient rain last August and September, Cape Verde faces a year of crop failure, which, once again, has given rise to anxiety and distress among Cape Verde's farmers.

Therefore, my Government will be forced, once again, to make an unexpected effort to address the consequences of such a situation, which, of course, will have a negative impact on the development process.

We therefore urge international solidarity with the people and Government of Cape Verde to help our country overcome the current farming crisis and ensure employment in the rural areas.

The world is seeing the gap widen between industrialized countries and developing countries. Economic globalization and the development of information and communications technology highlight existing differences. Restrictive immigration policies, which are associated with the spread of racism and xenophobia, are gathering speed day by day, which is disturbing to us.

Meanwhile, developing countries and, in particular, the least developed, face the consequences of accelerated population growth, which has direct repercussions on unemployment.

The pursuit of full employment should be the top priority of social and economic policies aimed at bringing about development in order to provide all — men and women — with the chance to ensure that their means of subsistence are secure and long-lasting. Unfortunately, the international community is still reluctant to assume its responsibilities in such matters.

A heavy burden thus falls upon the developing countries — the task of recovering from the delays resulting from an economic order that has not been, and still is not, in their favour.

This burden is even heavier in view of the inexorable trend towards the reduction of financial flows to the least developed countries, both in official development assistance and foreign direct investment.

In this regard, the Agenda for Development, aimed at supporting those countries in their efforts for recovery, should make urgent demands with regard to international cooperation for development. It should, at the same time, reaffirm the right to development as a main concern of the international community. The Agenda for Development cannot be seen as a mere enunciation of principles, but should be taken as a true charter of social and economic goals, with the United Nations playing a key role in its promotion and materialization.

In order to prepare the United Nations for the challenges facing humankind as we approach the end of the century, we are committed to improving of the Organization by promoting and undertaking reforms with the aim of strengthening it and empowering it so that it is better able to fulfil the objectives of its Charter. There have been long and complex negotiations on the reform and restructuring of the United Nations system. This exercise has been characterized by its particular intensity and richness, aimed at adapting the institutions of our Organization to the new challenges that face humankind as we approach the end of the century.

But we are close to the time when decisions of the utmost importance to the future of the United Nations will have to be taken. They will have to correspond, with due balance, to the concerns of large and small countries. What will certainly not be acceptable is a situation in which reforms end up maintaining the differences that already exist today. We support the idea that reforms should reflect the deep changes that have taken place in the 50 years since the creation of the United Nations. There must be fair representation for all regions of the world in the decision-making bodies of the United Nations, particularly in the Security Council. In this regard, we recognize the need for Africa to be duly represented, namely with African countries as permanent members of the Council.

We have all witnessed the successes, however relative, of the difficult talks on nuclear disarmament, in particular the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and the very recent adoption by the General Assembly of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which I had the honour and pleasure to sign on behalf of my country on 2 October 1996. We believe that these two documents provide a historic opportunity and a powerful impetus for the creation of conditions that will allow us to look with hope to the possibility, one day, of a world free of all nuclear weapons and of the nightmare of their use. The process of nuclear disarmament should, from now on, gain greater attention and follow-up.

The signature in Cairo, on 11 April, of the Pelindaba Treaty, which is the conclusion of joint efforts made by the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations, marked the solemn pledge of the Governments and peoples of Africa to assume their share of the task of ridding the continent and the planet of nuclear weapons, in the same way as did the Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean in 1967, and those of the South Pacific in 1985.

Cape Verde, which has consistently supported all efforts aimed at banning weapons of mass destruction, cannot but congratulate itself on the strengthening of international stability and security.

Expectations were therefore raised in respect of the planned fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We note that its mandate will be defined in the course of this session. We hope the special session will become a landmark in the creation of an atmosphere of relief and trust that will help us to reach the goal of eliminating weapons of mass destruction and reducing conventional armaments.

A combination of historical, political, economic and climatic factors, among others, have given Africa the

lowest level of development of any continent over the past three decades. Social and economic indicators are still negative, as are Africa's prospects for the future. Approximately 50 per cent of the population of our continent lives in a state of absolute poverty and that percentage will surely increase if quick and efficient solutions are not found to resolve this crisis. At the same time, as cause and consequence of this appalling scenario, we have witnessed a succession of bloody conflicts, bringing even greater poverty, disease and the degradation or even destruction of the environment.

For this reason, so many important resources and capabilities that are essential to assessing and resolving the complex issues of development are being wasted and, very often, forever lost on the battlefields.

But it is not only the countries directly involved in such conflicts that suffer the consequences. The tension brought about by the presence of armed groups across the borders of other States, the tragedy of refugees and displaced persons seeking shelter in neighbouring countries and very often the consequent destruction of the environment, the spread of disease, the degeneration of moral values, the horror of suffering and behaviours far removed from human values are all situations not confined to the territorial limits of the States where conflicts occur.

It is therefore with deep sorrow that we witness the never-ending armed conflicts on our continent, despite the efforts of both the African and the international communities to put an end to them. Even when the parties involved seem to have reached an agreement for the re-establishment of peace, there are unjustified reversals that jeopardize the entire process.

An example of this is the conflict that still exists in Angola, a country with which Cape Verde has deep ties not only of history and culture, but also of solidarity. We support the efforts of the Angolan Government and the international community to undertake all tasks aimed at bringing about a lasting peace, social stability and the normal functioning of institutions at the national level, without which the Angolan people will be unable to enjoy the tranquillity they rightfully deserve and the wealth they could and should benefit from, given the huge potential of their country.

The need for joint action to end the nightmare of war in several regions of the African continent is becoming more and more urgent. The creation of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution was a far-sighted decision giving our continent the autonomous ability to help resolve situations of violence and tension.

Nevertheless, it is important to stress that, in keeping with the principles that are at the foundation of that Mechanism, its main aim is anticipation and prevention of conflicts. Peacekeeping and security in the world remain the primary responsibility of the United Nations Security Council, though there may be a justification in some situations for the involvement of the OAU in specific peacekeeping and observer missions.

Addressing the causes of the conflicts, however, remains the most important issue. These causes are to be found essentially in the conditions of underdevelopment that persist in most of our countries. Such conditions nurture the seeds of violence and intolerance, are at the root of armed conflicts and block the establishment of structures to ensure democratic participation and its resulting human rights benefits. Key elements for the attainment of peace in Africa are therefore the promotion of lasting development, investment in human resources and ensuring that current processes of democratization are successful and widespread. It is imperative that such processes be duly supported so that they can consolidate and improve the living conditions of the population and stand up to possible *coups de force* or other such threats. The promotion and use of dialogue must be employed to resolve situations of civil strife and armed conflict.

In the light of the dimension and scale of the problem of development in Africa and questions of security, we agree with the argument that Africa is currently the major challenge facing the United Nations. Development, security and peace are major concerns in the minds of the leaders of the continent and of all others interested in the future of Africa. These goals are interrelated and cannot be achieved separately.

Of all the factors limiting the achievement of such objectives, the reduction of poverty is undoubtedly the one that must first be overcome through a strategy of sustainable development. Without this, the remaining economic and social goals cannot be achieved. The persistence of poverty is a constant threat not only to economic development, but also to the political and social stability of States and to the preservation of the environment.

Another fact to bear in mind is that solutions for the problems of development in Africa should be designed

and managed on our own continent, thus making responsibility for Africa dependent on the development of the countries thereof. In this context, Africa is currently deeply committed to the search for internal and lasting solutions to its problems, which in no way suggests a rejection of the technological and financial resources and contributions that we believe the international community should continue to make available so that we can overcome the major difficulties we still face.

African countries are fully aware that they must take their destiny into their own hands and have been trying to implement measures that reflect their seriousness and hence worthiness to receive support in order to produce the expected results.

Several African countries have been undertaking institutional reforms with the aim of opening up their markets, reducing the role of the State in the economy and strengthening the private sector in order to make it credible and able to generate employment. Such reforms, combined with democracy and the development of civil society, tend to promote social and economic stability, thereby marshalling internal resources and encouraging foreign investment.

In this context, we must stress the importance of initiatives to promote greater foreign private investment, a source of employment and added value which is fundamental to ensuring the continuous and stable growth of African economies.

Another important initiative in which Africa is engaged is the African Economic Community, which received a decisive boost in May 1994 when the Abuja Treaty entered into force. As a first step in its implementation, the African countries are engaged in strengthening the regional integration of their economies through regional economic communities.

Last year, the Organization of African Unity adopted the Cairo Plan of Action to give new impetus to the economic and social development of Africa. Its objectives — responsible management, food security, development of human resources, the proper and effective use of natural resources, cooperation and economic regional integration — are ambitious but feasible. They depend upon the political will of Governments and their ability to marshal the internal means and external support to achieve these objectives. Mention should be made in this regard to the principles set out in the important decisions adopted or being prepared by the United Nations: the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the Agenda for Development.

The Cairo Plan of Action also recalls the need for the adoption of measures limiting the negative impact of the Uruguay Round agreements on the development of Africa in general and of the least developed countries in particular, and urges creditors to be prepared to assist in finding ways to reduce the debt burden, particularly as regards the current levels of debt servicing.

The recent mid-term review of the United Nations New Agenda was an opportunity for the international community to renew its commitment to measures aimed at adding new impetus to implementation, particularly as regards external debt, the diversification of African economies, greater access to markets and the transfer of technology. Africa sincerely hopes that that commitment, freely entered into by its partners, will be promptly fulfilled.

Although the current situation tends to raise very serious concerns, it is nonetheless possible to find encouraging signs pointing to positive developments in the situation on the African continent from the point of view of economic growth and the consolidation of democracy. And these are more than mere signs; some examples of clear successes already visible in Africa in recent years show that it is not heading exclusively towards chaos and destruction. It is necessary to find appropriate policies to manage these positive signs, policies which we must be courageous enough to implement. We are certain such actions will achieve results.

Although the signs are positive, they still do not reflect an irreversible trend. The burden of dependency resulting from past policies is still too heavy for Africa to reverse the situation on its own. Now more than ever, the international community, specialized agencies and the industrialized countries that are friends of Africa are called upon to strengthen financial and technical assistance to the continent so that underdevelopment can be definitively overcome.

In this regard, we congratulate certain countries on their willingness to maintain their levels of cooperation with Africa. Cape Verde is also pleased to note the efforts and generosity of certain partners, including some from the South, on behalf of the development of our country.

Cape Verde does not expect to be solely a beneficiary of the actions and initiatives of the United Nations. Despite its limitations and the fragility of its economy, my country wishes to contribute to the search for solutions to problems demanding our attention and to participate in those actions in which our presence is necessary.

Despite its brief history as an independent country, Cape Verde has several times had an opportunity to play a positive role in processes involving other countries, either contributing to the dialogue and understanding between the parties involved or through participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

It is the understanding of the Government of Cape Verde that, despite the structural difficulties it faces, it is duty-bound to contribute to the creation of a peaceful international environment and a partnership of solidarity that will allow all the nations of the world to benefit from mankind's scientific and technical achievements and to improve social management in order to guarantee each citizen internationally recognized basic rights associated with the values of freedom, democracy, development and well-being.

In this regard, we must recall here the suffering of the people of East Timor, deprived of the right to exercise self-determination and subjugated to a foreign military occupation for over 20 years. We note with admiration the resilience of the courageous Maubère people, who have lost so many of their sons to the cause of freedom. In this forum, where so much has been done to support the right of colonial peoples to decide their own destinies, we join our voice to those demanding the restitution of legality in that territory and that the Timorese people be given the full exercise of their rights, including the right to self-determination.

In this same context, we cannot remain indifferent to the recent events in the Middle East. They show clearly that there is no alternative to the peace process and that dialogue, tolerance and common sense must prevail over force, violence and intolerance, failing which the region could well be plunged anew into chaos and destruction, thus delaying once again the hope of its peoples to live in peace and security.

The eyes and hopes of mankind are turned to the United Nations. We are convinced that our Organization will emerge from this session with renewed strength and with new actions and initiatives that will enable us to look confidently to the challenges that the dawn of the third millennium holds for all Governments and peoples of the world.

The President: The next speaker is the Secretary of State for Foreign and Political Affairs of San Marino, His Excellency Mr. Gabriele Gatti.

Mr. Gatti (San Marino) (*spoke in Italian; English text furnished by the delegation*): On behalf of the Republic of San Marino and my delegation, I wish, first of all, to congratulate you, Sir, on your unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. This is a recognition of your competence and gifts as a diplomat and thus a guarantee of success for our activities.

At the same time, let me also thank your predecessor for the excellent way in which he guided the work of the fiftieth session, just concluded.

We are all aware that the United Nations rests upon a community of States. Similarly, we are all aware that the very existence and future of any State depends on the individuals who not only comprise it but also determine its life and shape its history.

The United Nations, therefore, must understand and meet the needs of all human beings if it is to represent the entire family of Member States, protect their interests and fulfil the legitimate expectations of the largest possible number of individuals.

Mr. Çelem (Turkey), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Presently, humanity is confronted with the challenges of development versus underdevelopment, progress versus recession, wealth versus extreme and ever-increasing poverty. These phenomena affect less-favoured and socially advanced countries alike, leading to social discrepancies and situations in which some manage to plan their own development, while others, deprived of job opportunities, fail.

Development issues are inextricably intertwined with the destiny of nations. They change the face of countries and peoples and exacerbate the pressures on the less-favoured and most populous regions of the world. This is a real and constant threat to peace.

In some cases, the situation is aggravated by the fragility or, even worse, lack of democratic institutions. Here, power is wielded as an end in itself and not as an

instrument for achieving the common ideal. Societies and States tend to withdraw into themselves, their only concern being to retain their strength and power. Sometimes those who hold the power do not bother to meet the needs of a rapidly changing society, except when forced to preserve the necessary consensus.

Our Organization should spare no effort to help countries and peoples alike to redress the balance and remedy these errors.

The items on the agenda for discussion at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly are of paramount importance and deserve the utmost attention and impartial and thorough analysis, since they pertain, on the one hand, to the peaceful coexistence of peoples and, on the other, to the existence and the structure of the Organization itself. Ultimately, peace and coexistence depend on and are best governed by this institution.

All efforts must be pooled to improve, update and render the United Nations more effective. This objective can be achieved through a reform of the system inspired by equality, justice and wider democracy and aimed at ensuring broader participation and the fair sharing of duties and powers among all Member States.

San Marino pledges itself to fulfilling the tasks derived from its United Nations membership, while benefitting from the opportunity to participate actively and make its contribution to the various bodies of the United Nations.

Undoubtedly, the strengthening and enhancing of the United Nations require a review of the composition, role, functioning and powers of the Security Council. This review process, however, is proceeding very slowly and at times reveals inadequate understanding, cooperation and acceptance of the views of others.

We are convinced that the Security Council must adjust to the changes brought about by historical events and, consequently, to the expanded membership of the United Nations itself, whose character and essence are clearly becoming increasingly universal. San Marino believes that the Security Council must increase its membership, since, as it stands today, it no longer reflects the world's reality, nor does it promote a rotating system in which all States, irrespective of their size, are equally represented and can participate and make their own contributions.

As regards the decision-making process of the Security Council, we believe that the maintenance, exercise and potential extension of the right of veto must be carefully reconsidered. Fortunately, we are living in an era characterized by dialogue, debate, discussion, proposals and the search for joint solutions. These are the instruments which we should resort to, rather than the right of veto. Over 50 years of activity and progress allow and entitle us to reconsider other instruments that, having proved useful in dealing with initial difficulties and tragic situations, are no longer necessary for further growth and consolidation.

Lastly, special attention should be paid to the development and interpretation of the Security Council's rules of procedure, with a view to adopting a more open attitude and a larger involvement of States in discussing the issues at stake. In this context, let me call on all Member States to intensify their efforts to find a universally acceptable solution.

Is this all mere utopia? If it is, then we must not forget that those who have committed themselves to serving their countries and the international community have a duty to translate this utopia rationally into a political design, without neglecting or ignoring other people's expectations. Only in this way will that utopia become a real political design based on the principles of responsibility, equality and justice.

I wish to express the deepest satisfaction of the Government of the Republic of San Marino at the adoption of the resolution on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which my country cosponsored. Today, I have the honour of signing this Treaty on behalf of my country. We hope that all States will become loyal Parties to the Treaty and cooperate in the elimination of nuclear energy for non-peaceful uses, so that future generations may inherit an environmentally sound planet.

Given its geographical location in Europe, San Marino is particularly attentive to the evolution of the peace process in the Mediterranean area, especially in the Middle East, where the earlier general enthusiasm has been overshadowed by disenchantment and frequent difficulties. Fortunately, hope, however weak and volatile, is still alive. The Middle East still needs the international community's commitment and encouragement to proceed to a peaceful settlement of long-standing and more recent disputes that are the cause of division and uncertainty.

In the speech I delivered at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, I stressed, on behalf of the Government of San Marino, the need to reconsider the instrument of the embargo, its effectiveness and repercussions, especially in those cases where, in the absence of armed conflict, international isolation alone has proved a valid moral and political means of international pressure. In this regard, it is with satisfaction that I note that the elimination of coercive economic measures as a means of political compulsion has been placed on this session's agenda. The Government of the Republic of San Marino is confident that the debate will lead to a proper examination and resolution of the problem, so that innocent people who are already suffering are no longer the main targets of these measures.

The Republic of San Marino firmly believes that the United Nations, like the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, must remain the most appropriate forum for producing concrete results and enhancing the mechanism of fruitful dialogue and the exchange of ideas. The most daunting challenge is still that of preserving future generations from the scourge of war by reaffirming human dignity and promoting free and equitable social progress.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Jordan, His Excellency Mr. Khaled Madadha.

Mr. Madadha (Jordan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Permit me at the outset, Sir, to extend warm congratulations to Mr. Razali on the confidence shown in him by the international community in electing him President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. I take this opportunity to extend my best wishes to him and to the other members of the Bureau for success in directing the meetings of this session and in all endeavours to strengthen our Organization and promote peace in our world. I also congratulate Mr. Razali's friendly country, Malaysia.

I also take this opportunity to express my thanks and appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Freitas do Amaral, and the former members of the Bureau for their effective stewardship of the fiftieth session.

I also wish to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the dedicated efforts he has sincerely and honestly made to advance the Organization and to promote its humanitarian mission of settling disputes between States by peaceful means. In conformity with the decision of the League of Arab States, Jordan supports the extension of the Secretary-General's mandate for another term, in order to enable him to pursue his mission and efforts in the service of international peace and security and the reforms he has initiated in the organs and Secretariat of the Organization.

The role of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in the protection of international peace and security and in enhancing and directing the world economy towards liberalization and integration are among the main reasons for my country's devotion to the Organization and adherence to its Charter. In view of this, and out of our sense of responsibility and concern for the efficiency and relevance of the Organization, we appeal to all Member States to continue to support it, to fulfil their obligations to it consistently and to work to resolve its financial crisis.

I assert my country's firm position on the need to implement the necessary administrative reforms and restructure the Security Council. The structure of the Council no longer reflects the current balance of power. Any expansion of the permanent membership of the Council should take into account the increase in the number of developing countries and the growing economic power of certain industrial nations, such as Germany and Japan. We have seen many plans and proposals on this matter which the Security Council should carefully consider, such as the Italian plan. A review of the veto power enjoyed by the permanent members should reflect the democracy and transparency we seek.

In this context, I must emphasize the need to review the question of economic sanctions, which neither distinguish between a political entity and its innocent unarmed civilian population, nor provide compensation to third States adversely affected by such sanctions. We must work together to create a durable formula. We also call for opening the membership of the United Nations to all peace-loving States, as stipulated in Article 4.1 of the Charter.

This international Organization has made worthy peacekeeping efforts in many countries. It has made human sacrifices that would be unfair and unwise to ignore. Jordan is very proud to have been among the first countries participating in the peacekeeping forces in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere. In this regard, my country's effective participation in the Implementation

Force's peacekeeping and peacemaking operation in Bosnia is noteworthy.

In this regard, the fraternal people of Bosnia must be congratulated on the Dayton Agreement and on the elections it has held. A special tribute should be paid to President Alija Izetbegović for winning the presidential election. We are ready, along with other peace-loving countries, to help the people of Bosnia make the new democratic experiment a success, consolidate and rebuild the federal State and promote its reconstruction, development, sovereignty and stability.

Before I move on to another international issue, I would like to congratulate the United Nations on opening the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty for signature. My country is proud to have been among the first countries to sponsor the draft resolution under which this Treaty was adopted and to have signed it. We hope that steps towards nuclear disarmament will continue and will encompass the Middle East region. We hope that negotiations will begin for the conclusion of a treaty in the very near future banning the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear and otherwise, so that a nuclear-weapon-free zone may be established in the Middle East.

The peoples of our region have suffered the agonies of devastating wars over the past five decades, wars which have caused the deaths of tens of thousands, destroyed basic infrastructures and brought the people of our countries bloodshed, pain, deprivation, poverty and instability. Due to the allocation of resources to the war machine and the terrible arms race, their economies have gone into recession.

Signs of hope, however, emerged for these people five years ago with the Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991 and the subsequent bilateral and multilateral negotiations between Arabs and Israelis. Palestinian hopes were revived with the 1993 Oslo agreement. The Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements that followed restored happiness and hope to millions of Palestinians, who saw in that agreement the beginning of the end of their pain, bloodshed and destroyed economy. They were newly optimistic about securing their right to self-determination within their own State, rebuilding their national economy, industry and infrastructure, which had been destroyed by wars, and the onset of peaceful trade relations with their neighbours in Jordan, Israel and other countries of the region. Hope was also rekindled by the peace treaty concluded between Jordan and Israel in October 1994 and the resulting bilateral agreements on the establishment of diplomatic and economic relations, bilateral and regional cooperation, the reconstruction of the region and the establishment of strong trade and economic relations between the two countries, to the benefit of their peoples and other peoples in the region, opening the way to comprehensive regional cooperation.

Concrete progress was also made on the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli peace tracks. There were prospects for a Syrian-Israeli agreement based on the "land-for-peace" principle, providing for full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan in return for a peace agreement ending the state of war and paving the way for peaceful relations based on strong foundations of understanding and normal, peaceful coexistence.

Current events and negative factors and measures in the occupied Arab territories — a return to the settlement-building policy; the violation of the sanctity of the holy places; the closure of the territories; the denial of work opportunities; the refusal to implement the agreements signed on the Palestinian-Israeli track; the postponement and impediment of self-government negotiations; the unilateral determination of the status of Jerusalem and of the self-government negotiations; the refusal to resume negotiations, suspended seven months ago, with Syria and Lebanon; and the refusal to return to the terms of reference and framework of the Madrid Peace Conference — have given rise to frustration among the peoples of the region, who are beginning to lose the rekindled hope to which I have referred.

Despite the excessively negative slogans against peace used by the new Israeli Government during the electoral campaign, we in Jordan — the King, the leadership and the people — welcomed the new Administration and the newly-elected Prime Minister out of respect for the free will of the Israeli people and non-interference in their internal affairs. We called for the continuation of the comprehensive peace process in the region and pledged to utilize the peace treaty with Israel to establish such a comprehensive peace. We urged our neighbours, Syria and Lebanon, to deal with the new realities and the new Israeli Government positively and realistically. Our motto and position at the Arab Summit Conference held at Cairo last June was a call to extend more time and opportunity to the new Israeli Government to return to the peace process on the bases agreed upon at the Madrid Peace Conference: the "land-for-peace" formula and the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

All the participants in the Madrid Peace Conference had believed that the success achieved on the Palestinian-Israeli track and the Jordanian-Israeli track had opened to the peoples of the region, including the Israeli people, the door to a new life and a better future based on the principles of justice, peace for all, peaceful relations and trade. They had also believed that this success proved once again how misguided and wrong are obsolete principles such as that of achieving security through force and thus through the imposition of forced solutions. It also debunked the principle of occupying other people's land by force to ensure one's own security. Indeed, it has become clear that security can be ensured only through dialogue, peaceful coexistence, negotiations, mutual respect among peoples and free economic and trade relations, rather than through power politics and the imposition of forced solutions. Yet once again we are hearing certain nervous calls to revive the obsolete theory of security and the imposition of solutions by force.

Amid the gloom that has begun to enshroud the peace process, there is still a ray of hope. It is up to us, both Arabs and Israelis, to keep it shining with a view to securing a better future for our children and our grandchildren. For if, God forbid, we allowed this hope to become lost, a renewed cycle of violence, instability, tension, terrorism and extremism would prevail in the region, as shown by the recent bloody violence.

At the Cairo summit, all Arab Governments expressed for the first time their collective support and blessings for the peace process and proclaimed that peace is an irreversible strategic option. We have heard similar pledges from the new Israeli Government. It is our sincere hope that the United States and Russian co-sponsors of the peace process will intervene, and that international efforts will be made to put the peace process back on track, restore its previous vigour and impetus and put an end to all the obstacles that might impede or disrupt it.

The war and destruction in the region and the peace process that followed it have been described as a series of missed opportunities; for in the past all of us have missed invaluable opportunities for peace. Now here we are again, about to return to that insane policy. By challenging the opponents of peace, President Arafat and the Palestinian leadership have demonstrated a serious and unambiguous desire to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. It is not wise to reward him by embarrassing him before the Palestinian people and placing him in an unenviable situation vis-à-vis the opponents of peace, who are betting on the failure of his policies and the failure of the peace process.

Nor is it prudent to stipulate that Syria and Lebanon must return to the negotiating table without preconditions, as though the Madrid Conference and the painstaking and tough negotiations that followed had never taken place. Does this condition itself not constitute a precondition for the peace process? We all declared our intention to nurture the magnificent baby born at the Madrid Conference, whom we named "the peace process". But then, we disagreed on the method to be followed in the baby's upbringing. Let us return to working together, so as not to kill the baby in its cradle and along with it our peoples' chances for the better life which shone on the horizon after decades of death and destruction.

One of the most important factors for the credibility of the Middle East peace process is the improvement in the living conditions of the population through increased investment which has resulted in lowering the high unemployment rate. We in Jordan have taken numerous measures, enacted legislation and concluded agreements with a view to protecting and promoting investment. I regret that despite these reassuring measures and guarantees and the convening of two international economic summit conferences — in Casablanca in 1994 and in Amman in 1995 — the real outcome in terms of investment in the region has been disappointing. Apart from the increase in tourism that we noticed following the signing of the peace treaty, foreign industrial investment remains very low notwithstanding the many profitable projects put forward at the recent Amman economic conference.

While private foreign companies may have an excuse for reluctance to invest, because of fears related to the regime's history and political situation, the Governments of developed industrial countries have no excuse for their failure to provide their insurance companies with sufficient guarantees against investment risks to encourage companies to increase their investments. This is particularly true since the increased profitability of these companies' investment projects and the resulting higher incomes in the recipient developing countries would benefit the economies of the developed industrial countries as well. In this regard, we have high hopes for the successful conclusion of the fourth economic summit, to be held in Cairo next November. This will provide another opportunity for foreign investors to contribute to the region's development and to

the consolidation of peace — quite apart from the benefits they and the economies of countries are bound to reap.

One of the region's biggest and most complex problems is that of Palestinian refugees; its settlement has been deferred to the final status negotiations. It is regrettable that the international community has not yet given this important political and humanitarian problem the attention, understanding and assistance it deserves. Every year we receive the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, in which he describes the Agency's budget deficit and the consequent need to reduce the level of services provided to the refugees.

We urge the wealthy industrial States to give this matter their fullest attention and to increase their contribution in order to ensure the survival of this temporary solution to the major humanitarian problems that affect over 3.5 million Palestinian refugees, including some 1.5 million who live in Jordan. The Government of Jordan, despite its limited resources, is compelled to provide assistance and relief worth approximately $300 million annually. It is necessary to provide support for the Agency's budget to enable it to continue its work effectively, pending a final solution of the refugee problem on the basis of United Nations resolutions providing for their repatriation or compensation. As long as it remains without a substantive and effective solution, this problem will continue to constitute a time bomb — forgive me for using this term to indicate the magnitude of this problem — for the peace process, in view of its significant humanitarian and political dimensions.

The subject of peace in the Middle East leads us to demand speedy implementation of the recent agreement between Iraq and the United Nations for a partial lifting of the embargo on the sale of Iraqi oil in order to provide food and medicine to the brotherly people of Iraq, who have suffered, and continue to suffer, from the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq. These sanctions have punished them but have not affected their leaders. We call upon the Government of Iraq to implement United Nations resolutions; respect the sovereignty, independence and freedom of neighbouring States; cooperate with the United Nations Special Commission; cooperate in the release of Kuwaiti prisoners of war held in Iraq; respect human rights; and establish a democratic system in which the rights of all its communities are respected. At the same time, we call for the lifting of the economic sanctions that are punishing the people of Iraq. We also call for respect for Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in its internal affairs. We reject any attempts aimed at dividing Iraq, such as the recently proposed "safe areas" scheme.

It is also our hope that the United Arab Emirates will be able to arrive at a peaceful solution enabling it to regain its three Gulf islands occupied by Iran. We call for non-interference in the internal affairs of Bahrain and extend our support to that sister country, at a time when it is the target of terrorism. We call upon Eritrea to find a peaceful solution to the question of its withdrawal from the Yemeni Huneish islands in response to Yemen's peaceful efforts, in order to maintain good-neighbourly relations and in gratitude for Yemen's assistance to Eritrea in attaining its independence and sovereignty.

We call for a just and speedy solution to the Lockerbie problem, and for a positive response to the initiatives and efforts of the League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which would ensure the trial and punishment of the perpetrators of that heinous terrorist act without punishing all the people of Libya.

My country supports international efforts to combat international terrorism. Hence our active participation at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, held earlier this year at the invitation of our sister country, the Arab Republic of Egypt, to explore the most effective means of international cooperation in this regard. We also support the decisions of the latest summit meeting of the Group of Seven industrial Powers aimed at fighting terrorism and punishing its perpetrators, as terrorism has become a dangerous international phenomenon that has taken the lives of many innocent people, destroyed the infrastructure of many countries, disrupted tourism and the free movement of innocent people and defamed national liberation and independence movements. We therefore support bilateral, regional and international cooperation to combat this ugly and destructive phenomenon.

Today the world stands on the threshold of a new century, only three years away. That historic occasion must not pass without our pondering and studying the events of the twentieth century in preparation for the coming twenty-first century. We should benefit from the lessons we have learned and the events we have witnessed in order to make the next century a safer, more secure, stable and developed one for future generations. An idea worthy of exploration and careful examination in

this regard is that of holding, at the outset of the new century, a special session of the General Assembly at the Heads of State level, to prepare for a new world order in whose shaping all States, large and small, developed and developing, would participate. This is only an idea which could be further elaborated and considered.

As the representative of a developing country, it concerns me that despite the great progress achieved in the areas of disarmament and the resolution of global security problems, there has been no resolution of the problem of the economic security of the developing States. The gap between the developed and developing countries in the areas of income and technology is growing. Small developing countries will not be able to find solutions in the foreseeable future to their heavy burden of persistent indebtedness. It is both disastrous and painful that many developing countries, such as my country, Jordan, give their full efforts to consolidate and develop their democratic systems, orient their economies towards privatization, reform their economic systems, redress their budgetary and balance-of-payment deficits, fully cooperate with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and make concrete strides in this respect, and yet find themselves, after their people have devoted all their resources, capabilities and productivity to servicing and repaying their burdensome debts, still striving breathlessly to catch up with the developed countries, without hope of soon ridding themselves of this burden. Therefore, the shaping of and preparation for any new world order to be developed must consider the important question of the economic security of the developing countries.

We now live in a world where distances between its various places and economic markets have been reduced due to tremendous technological strides in the areas of transport and communications. This means that the development and well-being of the developing countries is an important part of the solution to the recession in the developed countries. The idea of holding a special session of the General Assembly to prepare for a new world economic order could be the subject of a draft resolution which I hope will be brought before this Assembly for consideration.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Attorney General of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Her Excellency The Honourable Janet G. Bostwick, M.P.

Ms. Bostwick (Bahamas): The Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas warmly congratulates Ambassador Razali on his election to the presidency of this fifty-first session of the General Assembly. His skills as a distinguished diplomat are well known and, coupled with the cooperation of Member States, will create the requisite conditions for a successful Assembly. I wish to assure him of the full support of my delegation as he presides over the deliberations of this body.

I wish also to express my delegation's appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, who effectively guided the work of a most historic and memorable fiftieth session. We wish also to thank the Secretary-General for his leadership of the Organization over the past year.

The Bahamas is indeed honoured to have been elected to serve as a Vice-President of the General Assembly at the fifty-first session. I wish to thank all Member States for their support in our realization of this achievement.

Our deliberations during the last session provided an opportune environment for stocktaking and evaluation, as well as the opportunity to look ahead and consider how we ought to proceed for the next 50 years. The solemn Declaration which we adopted at the end of the Special Commemorative Meeting, highlighted the international community's continued commitment to the United Nations and to the purposes and principles of the Charter by which it is governed. The Bahamas is convinced that the United Nations remains the primary world body with the capacity and political will to bring together the disparate elements of the international community, so as to face and deal with the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The Bahamas, like other countries, would wish to see a strong and effective United Nations. It is our view that the three-tiered reform process currently under way in the political, economic and social and administrative areas represents an important step in that direction. We must remain diligent and focused in our work so as to transform the United Nations into a structure equipped for the fulfilment and support of the myriad demands of Member States.

In the area of political reform, the Bahamas continues to support the enlargement of the Security Council to enable it to become more effective, representative, democratic and transparent. We are disappointed that after another year of discussion little or no progress has been made. We urge all Member States

to exercise flexibility so as to expedite agreement on this important matter.

We acknowledge the need to strengthen the United Nations system in the economic and social fields. Action must be taken to reduce duplication and to improve coordination among the various agencies, including the Bretton Woods institutions.

There is a clear need for reform and greater efficiency in the administrative and financial areas. The discussions in the respective high-level Working Groups established to examine these areas have been useful. However, few, if any, meaningful decisions have been taken to date. We urge Member States to increase the momentum, so as to put in place the requisite measures to strengthen the efficacy of the Organization. At the same time, the Bahamas urges and appeals to Member States to make a more determined effort to meet their financial obligations to the Organization. We are aware that the assessment system needs reform. Thus, we should take the opportunity provided by this session to agree on an equitable scale of assessment for the next triennium. The scale of assessment, when finalized, should take into account all relevant circumstances, including the special circumstances of archipelagic island developing countries and the need for the development of a vulnerability index. The Bahamas also wishes once again to urge the international community not to use high per capita gross national product (GNP) as the sole measurement of capacity to pay when it considers the question of criteria for the scale. The Bahamas, as well as a number of other countries, has repeatedly argued that high per capita GNP is not an accurate measurement of a country's wealth. Indeed, it presents a skewed and distorted picture of the economic reality in my own country when one takes into consideration the duplication of infrastructure and social services.

In our efforts to reform this Organization, we must guard against engaging in reform for reform's sake. The restoration of the dignity of the individual must remain our primary focus. The extent to which we neglect this highest of priorities is the extent to which human rights abuses and inequities will abound, giving rise to tensions and conflicts on various levels, like those that have been witnessed by the international community in recent years with the escalation of civil wars and ethnic strife in many parts of the world. A total breakdown in society is the ultimate consequence of such activities, which completely overwhelm national resources and consume inordinate amounts of international energy which could be far more meaningfully expended. To achieve meaningful reform we will have to change our focus significantly. It will require a shift in paradigms, where issues previously neglected will have to be brought to the fore.

We need to be reminded that economic and social security directly influence political security. They must therefore be addressed in an integrated manner. We must guard against the additional threat of economic might being translated into military power, which not only sidelines and marginalizes the disadvantaged and dispossessed but also threatens our peace and security.

Our efforts must be aimed at raising the standard of living and quality of life of the world's most underprivileged. Despite impressive economic growth in many countries, human development continues to move at a snail's pace, particularly in developing countries. We must find a way to balance economic growth and human development so as to ensure the sustainability and livelihood of future generations.

We are merely proposing for the international community what is already in place in the Bahamas. The promotion and protection of human rights, the advancement of women, social justice, equality and development continue to receive priority attention from the Government of the Bahamas. We are fully committed to securing a social environment in which our citizens can live in harmony, prosperity and security, without fear or intimidation. Many of the recommendations contained in the plans and programmes of action of the recent world conferences have already been implemented in the Bahamas, and we will continue to put in place the necessary infrastructure to facilitate the implementation of those recommendations which have not yet been put into practice.

Our past actions have brought us to a day of reckoning. The wealth of oceans once deemed inexhaustible has proven finite. Global warming is no longer a prognostication, but a present condition. What is at stake here is the future of our planet and the lives of its inhabitants. The Bahamas urges that the special session for the review of Agenda 21 in 1997 be viewed as an opportunity to re-examine our strategy and to correct past mistakes. The Bahamas hopes that the special session will focus on practical proposals and not try to renegotiate Agenda 21. Definitive priorities and a recommitment to sustainable development should be set out, taking account of the recognized peculiar problems of small developing States and the international

community's commitment to provide resources to such States.

The Bahamas is concerned that protection be provided to the fragile and vulnerable economies of small States in a global community which is moving towards the strengthening and development of trading blocs. The new international trade regime has put small States at a disadvantage with the expectation that they liberalize their markets and open their borders in conformity with the obligations and commitments of the World Trade Organization. The playing field must be levelled so that due regard can be given to the fragile domestic economies of these States and their macroeconomic position. If the developed countries are demanding protection for their sensitive domestic industries, then similar demands by developing countries with respect to their domestic industry should not be viewed as a request that is unreasonable or inconsistent with current international trends.

A review of current events reveals new threats to the fragile peace process in the Middle East. The Bahamas urges the parties concerned to make every possible effort to restore order, to refrain from acts of violence and to reactivate the peace process, which enjoyed the widespread support of the international community. We commend President Clinton for his initiative in inviting Middle East leaders to Washington for discussion aimed at defusing this volatile situation and thus, hopefully, restoring confidence in the peace process.

Ongoing conflicts in Africa are of grave concern. The international community should see it as its duty to support measures for the prevention and resolution of conflict in the countries concerned and to address the economic and debt burdens that have crippled Africa. Although the African countries themselves have made strenuous efforts towards readjustment and recovery, they continue to require the assistance of the international community.

The Bahamas welcomes the approval by the Group of Seven of a debt-relief plan for the world's poorest nations. The debt-relief measure, which will release as many as 20 of the poorest countries from up to $7.7 billion in debt, will go a long way towards providing the needed relief for those countries in their economic growth and development.

The Bahamas is pleased to note that after four years of devastating warfare free elections have taken place in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We note the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the question of Cyprus, and we urge the parties concerned to continue to seek a just and viable solution to that conflict. Violence perpetrated against the people of Cyprus cannot be condoned.

Notwithstanding the considerable and praiseworthy efforts of the United Nations and the Organization of American States, Haiti still remains unstable to a degree that threatens the stability of the entire region, with a continuing outflow of immigrants seeking a better way of life in other countries. The majority of such immigrants retreat to the Bahamas.

It is regrettable that, notwithstanding the assistance of the international community, many areas of great concern remain to be effectively tackled in Haiti. Attempts to restore democracy are constantly hindered by the absence of the conditions necessary to support them. We are therefore left with a population surrounded by much activity, but one whose daily existence remains meagre at best. The consequences are predictable, namely, unrest and increased violence. It is therefore not sufficient to continue business as usual. The peculiar nature of the situation in Haiti requires specific, focused and targeted action that addresses causes and not effects, one in which initiatives provide direct benefits to the Haitian people.

The Bahamas views with much regret the continued escalation of the nefarious drug trade, particularly in the Latin American and Caribbean region. We must double our efforts to fight this terrible scourge, and it is our hope that the special session in 1998 will result in a renewed commitment to fight and eradicate this illicit activity.

We are also of the view that efforts must be renewed to address the problem of the traffic in small arms, which has increased to alarming proportions in recent times. We are particularly concerned about the large number of small arms that are smuggled into the Caribbean countries. We urge the countries that manufacture and sell arms to impose stricter arms control measures and provide assistance to vulnerable States to reduce this threat and increase the latters' capability to combat such illegal activity.

At the same time, the international community must voice unanimous disapproval and condemnation of the unrelenting increase in crime and the rise of terrorism that is currently confronting the international community. The Bahamas regrets the failure to reach international consensus on dealing swiftly with those grave areas of

concern. We urge that every effort be made to implement the relevant agreements already in force and to put in place any additional measures required to deal with these reprehensible activities.

The proliferation of arms, both conventional and those designed for mass destruction, poses a serious threat to humanity. Thus, the Bahamas welcomed the recent adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and intends to add its name shortly to the growing list of signatories. Anti-personnel land-mines present an insidious challenge to development and human dignity, and we should move towards a complete ban on such treacherous tools of murder.

The Bahamas denounces the continued trans-shipment of nuclear material and hazardous waste through the ecosensitive Caribbean Sea. In this respect, the entire Caribbean Community is in agreement. Indeed in 1992, the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community declared that the Caribbean Sea should be a nuclear-free-zone for purposes of shipment, storing or dumping of any radioactive or hazardous substances or toxic waste.

The Bahamas is encouraged by the steps taken by the second regular session of the International Seabed Authority at its meeting at Kingston last August, which are geared towards ensuring the effective functioning of the Authority.

Among the issues before the General Assembly this session is the matter of the international criminal court. We exhort the General Assembly to continue its work on this item so as to enable the convening of a conference of plenipotentiaries in 1998 to adopt the statute of the court, thus fulfilling a lacuna in the existing international legal order.

As members are aware, the Bahamas is an archipelagic nation which, by any measure, is a small State with a population of less than 300,000. However, we are a proud people and strong in our belief in justice for all and in the inalienable rights of all people, as enshrined in the Charter of this noble Organization.

It is in this spirit of justice and fair play that over the past two years we have repeatedly recorded our support in the General Assembly for the efforts of the 21 million inhabitants of the Republic of China on Taiwan as they entreat the Organization to examine the merits of establishing a committee to analyse in depth the implications, both now and for the future, of continuing to preclude those 21 million souls from formal representation in the General Assembly by way of membership in the United Nations.

The Bahamas again calls on the nations of the world, as Members of this august and united international body of nations, to hear the plea of those 21 million souls on the island of Taiwan and to consider what is just and right for them as they too seek to avail themselves of the benefits of membership in the United Nations.

The next 50 years will be painful and exacting as we attempt to ensure that the pitfalls of the past are avoided. Many changes will be required. In effecting change, we must ensure that it is profitable, for while change is inevitable, progress is not. The tendency to hold onto the old way of doing business in the midst of necessary change will remain our greatest challenge. As we seek to balance our efforts, it must be remembered that transformation in one area does not necessarily relegate all others to irrelevance.

Many reasons have been proffered for the present state of affairs. Not surprisingly, none of them seem to involve the proponents. While everyone talks about the future, few are willing to make the necessary sacrifices to secure it. Rhetoric boils with urgency, but talks move slowly, and action is even more halting.

The uncharted waters ahead remain daunting, defined by bilious seas of unrelenting, sophisticated, transnational criminal activity, which is tearing at the very fabric of society. Environmental degradation has exposed the Earth to permanent damage. Navigation of these seas requires us to rise above platitudes and empty promises. We must repudiate the adversaries of peace.

Our evaluations during the past session confirmed the continuing validity of the United Nations as the principal mechanism for addressing world concerns. Despite its uneven accomplishments, the United Nations facilitates collaboration for the resolution of societal ills, whatever their origin. The structure and machinery of the United Nations must be such that we are encouraged to continue to use the relatively calm chambers of this forum for our deliberations. This is the only safeguard we have against countries' being tempted to take their disputes out to sea.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for External Relations of Sudan, Mr. Ali Osman Mohamed Taha, on whom I now call.

Mr. Taha (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express to Mr. Razali Ismail our sincere congratulations on his election as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. His rich experience, wisdom and knowledge will definitely lead to the success of our deliberations, which are taking place in very delicate international circumstances. I assure him of the full support and assistance of my delegation in discharging his task successfully.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the outgoing President, Mr. Freitas do Amaral, for his successful efforts in leading the work of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

The international community had keenly hoped that the post-cold-war era would result in an end to the tensions that had characterized the international scene and to the arms race and armed conflicts. All nations, particularly those in the developing world, have aspirations to build a new world order whose cornerstone would be equality among States, non-interference in their internal affairs, transparency and respect for ideological, cultural and religious diversity.

Any observer of today's international scene would conclude that events are completely contrary to expectations. Tensions have escalated, and political, military and economic threats are on the increase. Apparently, equality among States of sovereignty, rights and obligations no longer exists. Moreover, the nuclear threat still lingers on, military conflicts have not ceased and ideological fanaticism and cultural hegemony have become the major features of the new world order.

The Sudan is of the view that the structure of the international community, which is based on ideological, political and cultural diversity and pluralism, prompts us all to accept peaceful coexistence and dictates that harmony and diversity among nations become the vehicle for interaction and dialogue within the framework of pursuing national interests in the context of the international system.

The nations of the world expect the United Nations to be a forum in which they can express their views and positions and an instrument for the continued pursuit of humanity's aspirations to freedom, prosperity, peace and security.

It is against that background that the call has sounded for the reform of the United Nations system. True and sincere adherence to the spirit and letter of the Charter of the United Nations, equality, respect for the sovereignty of Member States, non-interference in their internal affairs and respect for their right to choose are the bases for strengthening the United Nations and fostering its role, transparency and democratization, so that it may meet the enormous challenges of maintaining international peace and security and serving economic and social development.

I should like to point out that my country has followed with satisfaction the positive reforms that have been undertaken by the Secretary-General. The Sudan supports the position expressed by both the League of Arab States and the Organization of African Unity endorsing the re-election of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali for a second term.

The Sudan also welcomes General Assembly resolution 50/227 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. On the other hand, it is imperative that a thorough review of the Security Council take place to ensure its democratization and to allow for equitable representation by the developing countries, including permanent membership. There is a strong need to review the work and procedures of the Security Council in order to achieve transparency and to enable all States to follow the formal and informal meetings of the Council. It is equally vital that the decision-making mechanism be corrected by establishing just criteria to guide its policies and distance it from selectivity and double standards. In this context, the veto concept must be reviewed and corrected so that the principle of equality among Member States stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations may become a reality.

Finally, the Security Council should discharge its political responsibilities without addressing legal issues, which fall within the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, as stipulated in the Charter and the Statute of the Court. The Court must be enhanced to enable it to shoulder its responsibilities in handling legal disputes among Member States.

In this connection, it is important to note the new trend towards the imposition of sanctions against some countries as a means of settling certain disputes, as has been witnessed recently. Such sanctions have adversely affected the people of those countries, particularly the vulnerable sectors of society, namely, women, children and the elderly, the very sectors that the United Nations has pledged to protect and develop. It is therefore

necessary to reconsider the basis on which sanctions are imposed, the duration of such sanctions and the lifting of them when the requirements have been met or when their implications give rise to human suffering.

The ideal means for settling most recent conflicts is through strict compliance with the provisions for conflict resolution as stipulated in the Charter, the consolidation of cooperation among States, the encouragement of dialogue and the fostering of international public opinion through common understanding. Therefore, my country welcomes the endeavours designed to enhance preventive diplomacy and its mechanisms in order to achieve these goals.

I wish now to touch upon some important international issues. We look forward to the success of the ongoing efforts of the countries of West Africa, under the leadership of our sister country, Nigeria, to ensure that the people of Liberia are able to achieve stability. We also hope that the efforts to end the conflict in Angola will stop the bloodshed and steer the country towards development. We also call on the people of our sister country, Somalia, and the factions there, to rise above their differences in order to preserve independence and unity and resume their march towards prosperity and progress.

We also hope that Rwanda and Burundi will achieve stability, and that they will use diversity as an element of unity and strength. We call for the enhancement and support of the role of the Organization of African Unity in its efforts towards settlement of these conflicts. Africa, as the continent of the future, needs the support of the international community so that it can achieve political stability and economic development, and contribute to establishing a more just and stable international community.

As for the sanctions imposed on the Libyan people, we fully support the Libyan initiatives, which are also supported by the League of Arab States and the Organization of African Unity, to put an end to the conflict between Libya and three Western countries. My country appeals to the international community to exert greater efforts to reach a final settlement to this dispute and to alleviate the suffering of the Libyan people by ending the embargo to which they are subjected.

As for the Middle East, Sudan believes that peace should be built on the principles of justice and respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the Arab peoples in the region, and that peace must also be based on the commitments agreed to by the parties concerned. Any retreat from agreed obligations and commitments contradicts a real desire to achieve peace.

The irresponsible practices of the occupying Power will have serious repercussions for the peoples and countries of the region, and will have a negative effect on international peace and security. Therefore, Sudan calls for the immediate implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace on all tracks of the process. We draw the attention of the international community to the precarious situation in the region, the consequences of continued failure and the increasing possibilities of confrontation, which make it necessary for the international community to be vigilant, dynamic and strict in implementing justice and the rule of law so as to save the region from the potential scourge of war.

With regard to the Gulf region, we look forward to the restoration of the peace and security that it enjoyed before to the war. The Sudan would like to reiterate the importance of compliance with Security Council resolutions regarding the sovereignty and legitimate rights to existence of Kuwait, and the rights of its people and leadership with regard to security and stability. Similarly, we reiterate the right of Iraq to sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. We call upon the international community to lift the sanctions imposed on Iraq, which are causing suffering and starvation for the Iraqi people, and, in this respect, we call for the implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995).

With regard to Europe, my country expresses its satisfaction with the signing of the Dayton Agreement, aimed at ending the suffering of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. For several years their suffering caused anguish in the conscience of the international community. We also express our heartfelt congratulations to President Alija Izetbegović for gaining the people's confidence in his leadership. We call upon the United Nations to work for the full implementation of the Dayton Agreement, in particular the prosecution of Serb leaders responsible for the crimes of genocide, "ethnic cleansing" and other violations of international law. We also call on the international community to provide the necessary assistance and resources for the reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

With regard to Asia, we express our satisfaction with the agreement reached between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front,

which reflects the wisdom of both parties. In this context, we commend the efforts of President Soeharto of Indonesia and his Foreign Minister, which culminated in the agreement.

Social and economic development is the primary requisite for political stability to deter the scourge of wars and conflicts. In this respect we express the deep concern of Africa, which calls for justice, an end to its marginalization, and compensation for all the injustices inflicted on it during the colonial era and for the inequities of the international economic order.

The majority of the least developed countries are in Africa, and they need support and assistance. The debts of African countries, which exceed $300 billion, have become the main impediment to the ambitions of the continent to achieve development and to ensure the prosperity of its peoples. In most African countries debt-servicing costs exceed the gross national product and total export earnings.

The African countries have welcomed the World Bank initiative to reduce the debt burden of the least developed countries. Sudan believes that the effective solution of the debt crisis requires agreement on a unified strategy, with the aim of cancelling or reducing debts for all those countries, without exception. We also call on the international community to provide the necessary financial support for the Secretary-General's Initiative for development in Africa.

The mid-term reviews of the Paris Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s and of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s have shown that pledges should be followed by action, not by more promises.

In the field of food security and the prevention of famine, which are issues of primary concern to Africa and the rest of the world, my country places high hopes on the forthcoming World Food Summit, which will take place at Rome in November 1996, which will seek solutions for the problem of food security throughout the world. Sudan, which is perceived to be one of the countries with the potential to play a considerable role in the production of food, is ready to shoulder its responsibility, together with a serious contribution from the international community towards that end.

Human rights issues have priority on the agenda of the United Nations. They receive the full support of my country, based on our conviction that human beings are the only creatures that have been honoured and given responsibility by Almighty God, and on our commitment to human rights covenants.

However, we disagree with the growing tendency to exploit human rights issues to serve the political interests of certain circles, in a manner that jeopardizes the principles of human rights. Selectivity does not serve the cause of human rights as well as objectivity and comprehensiveness; confrontation and condemnation do not support human rights as well as cooperation, conviction and encouragement.

In line with this understanding, my country has established the Advisory Council for Human Rights, to protect human rights and investigate all accusations and complaints in this regard. The Sudan also resumed its cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on human rights after the causes of our withdrawal of cooperation had been removed. We reiterate here our commitment to cooperation on this matter, in accordance with the principles of objectivity, transparency and respect for cultural diversity and pluralism. This last principle prompts me to refer to the attack on Islam, which portrays it as barbaric and links it to terrorism. These malicious allegations are unjust; Islam is completely innocent. They contravene the principle of respect for all religions without exception. Wrong practices do not constitute evidence to justify negative judgements on the religious beliefs of those who perpetrate them. Such trends make all religions and philosophies susceptible to condemnation, regardless of their sources or origins.

Islam is the religion of tolerance and coexistence. We therefore call upon the international community to stop this ferocious campaign targeting Islam, and call upon the United Nations to distance itself from it. We hope that the positive positions of a number of Western leaders towards Islam will be echoed by the communities in the West, their mass media and their justice systems.

I deem it necessary, in addressing the Assembly, to shed light on some important political developments in my country. I hope members will listen attentively to what I am about to say and will open their hearts while I touch on the circumstances that surrounded the adoption of Security Council resolutions 1044 (1996), 1054 (1996) and 1070 (1996), respectively, against my country.

First, it has been proven that 11 Egyptians were the organizers and perpetrators of the attempt that was the subject of these resolutions.

Second, prior to the incident the suspects had been moving in a number of Arab, African and Asian countries. The Sudan was but one of these countries.

Third, the Security Council has based its resolutions on the statement of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, which called upon the Sudan to look for, locate and extradite the suspects if — and I underline if — they were found in the Sudan. This was stipulated in the Mechanism's decision of 19 December 1995.

Fourth, those resolutions were based on the assumption that the three suspects, who are Egyptians, were in the Sudan at the time the other members of the group entered Addis Ababa from other countries, several months before the incident.

Fifth — and this I would underline — no evidence was produced to prove that the suspects were in the Sudan at the time the incident took place or at the time the Sudan was asked to hand over the suspects, which request was received more than a month after the incident.

Sixth, a secret trial was conducted for the three suspects, who were sentenced to death. Concerned States and observers were never allowed to witness the trial.

Seventh, the Sudan has unequivocally condemned this incident since day one, and it has expressed its readiness to cooperate with the concerned parties.

Eighth, the Sudan received the first request to arrest the suspects 32 days after the incident. The request did not provide sufficient information about the suspects.

Ninth, the competent Sudanese authorities conducted exhaustive and complete investigations, but these did not yield any information or prove the presence of the suspects on Sudanese territory.

Tenth, though the Sudan has time and again requested the cooperation of concerned countries and of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) in this regard, its efforts have been in vain.

Eleventh, it has been proven that the first suspect is in Afghanistan. An official document confirming that fact was submitted to the Security Council by the Afghan Government. Moreover, in statements to the press, the first suspect claimed full responsibility for the incident and confirmed that he has not entered the Sudan since 1994.

Twelfth, the Sudan reiterates its full readiness to cooperate with all parties concerned, and it emphasizes that all available evidence indicates that the suspects are not present on Sudanese territory.

To insist on imposing sanctions on the Sudan defies logic and justice. This must be reconsidered in order to redress the injustice inflicted on my country and to alleviate the negative impact of this recurrent series of sanctions, which could cause massive human suffering to innocent people.

As we stated before the Assembly last year, we reiterate our condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We reaffirm our readiness to cooperate and to participate effectively in efforts to combat terrorism. We are actively involved in this matter at regional levels, in particular within the framework of the League of Arab States. We reiterate our commitment to contribute to the establishment of more secure, stable and just international relations.

The Sudan has witnessed a number of internal political developments this year. Parliamentary elections were held, followed by a presidential election by direct balloting. All Sudanese citizens exercised their democratic right in a free and fair election monitored by representatives of friendly countries and international and regional bodies.

The genuine efforts my Government has exerted tirelessly in recent years have culminated in the signing of a political charter between the Government and two important rebel factions. In response to the signing of the political charter, other rebel factions joined the peace process, most recently the SPLA, the Popular Movement for Peace and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of the Sudan.

While our charter affirms that shariah and are the main sources of legislation in the country, it allows States to promulgate complementary legislation compatible with their needs. We in the Sudan recognize cultural diversity. In accordance with our charter, freedom of religious belief and the prohibition of forceful conversion to any religion or faith are fully granted. We also recognize

pluralism. Accordingly, we guarantee the right to religion and belief. No one can be forced to accept any religious belief.

The Charter ensures the fair distribution of resources and power-sharing among citizens. It also calls for the establishment of a coordination council for the southern states in order to contribute to the implementation of the provisions stipulating the holding of a comprehensive referendum among the citizens of southern Sudan after an interim period, the length of which has yet to be negotiated.

Relentless efforts are being made in order to reach a settlement with the faction that has thus far remained outside of the peace process. Consultations and coordination are currently under way with the concerned parties, in particular with the countries of the region represented in the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD).

The Sudan welcomes and appreciates the contribution by friendly countries towards our sincere and genuine search for lasting peace in our country. I am pleased to inform members of the Khartoum agreement, signed between the Sudan and Uganda through the kind and much appreciated mediation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This agreement was further strengthened by the conclusion in Tehran last week of an agreement on a verification mechanism for the implementation of the agreement, with the participation of Iran and Malawi.

At this juncture, as I speak of Sudan's greatest and most urgent priority — peace — I wish to pay tribute to the intensive intellectual efforts being exerted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), within its specific mandate in the United Nations system and by all ways and means available to it, to establish a culture of peace. This is based on the construction in the minds of men in defence of peace, as stipulated in the preamble of UNESCO's statute.

My Government has fully cooperated with UNESCO in the promotion of the noble objectives of this programme. We did so notably through our contribution to the 1995 Barcelona conference and to the follow-up seminar in the Netherlands in May 1996. We sincerely hope that such dialogue will continue, with a view to creating an environment conducive to achieving a comprehensive peace.

For more than three decades, my country has hosted over a million refugees from neighbouring countries as a result of the unstable security situation in those countries. We have provided them security and stability as well as educational, health and other essential services. In the framework of solving the refugee problem through voluntary repatriation, the Sudan has cooperated with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other concerned countries, and has signed tripartite agreements for the repatriation of the refugees from some of those countries. We hope to reach similar agreements concerning the rest of the refugees, thus guaranteeing their repatriation in dignity.

We call upon the international community to share this burden with the Government of the Sudan. As the Sudan is experiencing severe economic difficulties, the resources allocated to refugee programmes have diminished considerably. This has resulted in severe pressures on Sudan's public sector, since the refugees share food and services with Sudanese citizens.

Aware of its responsibilities towards its people, the Sudan has sought to deliver food and other relief assistance to its war-affected populations throughout the country, including in areas controlled by the rebels.

Based on this understanding, the Sudan initiated the idea of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) and has consistently urged its implementation in cooperation with the United Nations. A number of General Assembly resolutions have commended the full cooperation between the Sudan and the United Nations in this Operation. The practical implementation of OLS has yielded a number of important observations, which we will submit to the review meeting scheduled this month in the hope of an adequate response. We urge and hope that the next phase of OLS will see a fairer distribution of relief supplies and that it will contribute further towards the development and rehabilitation process, thus promoting an environment conducive to peace and stability.

In spite of these observations, I should like to express the full commitment of the Government of the Sudan to cooperation with the United Nations in the implementation of the objectives of Operation Lifeline Sudan in accordance with the principles of neutrality, transparency and respect for the sovereignty of my country.

As mankind approaches the dawn of the new century, we hope that the United Nations will be its

vehicle and bridge to a world in which hope, peace and justice will prevail. Let us unite our wills and harmonize our ideals towards the achievement of this noble objective.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, His Excellency Mr. Povilas Gylys.

Mr. Gylys (Lithuania): On behalf of the Lithuanian Government, allow me to warmly congratulate Mr. Razali Ismail on his election as President of the General Assembly at this session.

This session marks the fifth anniversary of the re-entrance of Lithuania into the international community of states. Five years ago, Lithuania was admitted to the United Nations. At that time, the Organization, its Member States and the peoples of the world saw the chance to seize historic opportunities created by the new international situation, with its promise of peace and stability.

The past five years leave no doubt that some of these opportunities have been taken in a positive way. We have seen that the highest levels of cooperation are possible, both internationally and regionally. The destinies of different peoples around the world have been linked as never before by the globalization of the world economy and the information superhighway.

But many cross-border issues, such as crime, drugs, environmental pollution and terrorism, pose a major challenge to us not only as individual nation-States, but as a family of nations as well. These global challenges have far-reaching implications for the world Organization.

Originally, the United Nations was entrusted with the task of ensuring world harmony. Is it no less vital today to maintain and promote this worldwide policy, as designed by the founders of the United Nations? My answer is in the positive.

For this reason, we need an Organization that can be more responsive to the demands of Member States, and Member States that act responsibly by setting realistic goals and providing the resources needed for their implementation.

During these past five years, Lithuania has progressed politically and economically. Our relations with neighbouring States are friendly and mutually beneficial, thus ensuring a secure and stable environment in the region. We are in the process of becoming integrated into European and transatlantic structures. Negotiations on accession to the World Trade Organization are well-advanced, ties with our neighbours that are members of the Central European Free Trade Agreement are gaining strength. The most valuable cooperation is being advanced with Nordic countries, the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance. These dimensions of cooperation have been fruitfully applied in other structures as well. Cooperation with the European Union on core United Nations issues — humanitarian affairs, human rights, peacekeeping, structural and financial reforms — and with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the Implementation Force mission is the best example. We are striving to deepen and broaden this cooperation.

The global challenges before us require the commitment of Member States to the goals enshrined in the United Nations Charter and call for structural and institutional reform of the Organization. We have begun the reform aimed at streamlining the functions of the United Nations and rendering its institutional structure more effective and flexible to deal with tasks which sometimes cannot be foreseen in advance. We must bear in mind that the future Organization can be only as effective as its Member States desire it to be.

First, it goes without saying that we must put the United Nations on a sound financial footing and strengthen its capacity to fulfil its vital tasks. We support the proposals put forward by the European Union in this regard. A realigned scale of assessments, annual revision of the scale, phasing out the scheme of limits, lowering the assessment floor and swift implementation of the proposals in practice would be the tools to overcome the financial crisis and would certainly be an incentive for Members to regularize payments.

Lithuania remains committed to its financial obligations to the Organization. We also reiterate our fundamental belief that the scale of assessments must reflect the capacity to pay. At a time when many countries, Lithuania included, are undergoing budgetary adjustments and reviews, sound management of the resources of the United Nations takes on added importance.

Secondly, we believe that the functioning of United Nations decision-making bodies must be improved. The Security Council makes decisions that are binding on all Member States and influences the lives of millions. It is thus essential to make the Council more representative of

the world as it is today. More specifically, Lithuania has called for increasing the representational capacity of the Security Council in both categories of membership. The Government of Lithuania recognizes that developing countries have a case for improving their representation. We also recognize that some countries, such as Germany and Japan, can make a special contribution and that they are ready to assume special political, military and financial responsibility as new permanent members. In our view, due consideration should also be given to the aspirations to an additional non-permanent seat of the countries of Eastern Europe, whose numbers have tripled in recent years. We hope for agreement on the reform of the Security Council. Lithuania supports proposals to this end and encourages stronger movement by States towards negotiations on the implementation of reform.

In terms of a comprehensive reform of the United Nations system, any such reform is likely to fail if there is no clear vision of its objectives and of the strategies for pursuing them. A stark reassessment of the mission and mandates is included in the United Nations medium-term plan for 1998-2001. We consider it to be a good basis for debate on the enhancement of the United Nations and for strengthening its capacity to face new emerging challenges.

Lithuania, striving to make its contribution to international cooperation in the maintenance of security and stability, is determined to continue to improve the skills of its peacekeepers, civilian police monitors and military observers and will offer them to the United Nations in the service of peacekeeping operations. Lithuania, in cooperation with Estonia and Latvia, and also with Poland, is advancing the development of joint peacekeeping units, an exercise which in itself is a testimony to ultimate understanding and cooperation between countries.

The costs and scope of United Nations peacekeeping operations have proliferated dramatically since 1990. One of the best ways to reduce this proliferation, and more particularly to prevent human suffering, is to implement many of the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General in his "An Agenda for Peace", especially in terms of resolving disputes before violence breaks out.

United Nations intervention too often comes too slowly and too late under very difficult circumstances. Lacking resources, the Secretary-General is sometimes expected to maintain peace where there is no will to maintain peace. We feel that the emphasis needs to be placed on strengthening the United Nations system's preventive capacity. We may need to adopt the multidimensional approach to the concept of security, mobilize the United Nations system in order to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflict, and attack the problem at its very roots.

Lithuania welcomes measures to strengthen the United Nations administrative structures in charge of peacekeeping operations. The experience of the past few years leads us to believe that we need to explore non-traditional approaches to conflict prevention and resolution, including the Organization's rapid response capability. While the demand in this domain still seems to be more than the United Nations is equipped for, the burden-sharing of peacekeeping with other regional organizations has to prevent the eruption of a severe crisis. The complexity of the maintenance of peace and security should not be solely a United Nations enterprise. In Europe, we have the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which operates in accordance with agreed principles and is engaged in activities to help parties to resolve disputes without recourse to fighting.

Lithuania believes that any strategy for preventing armed conflicts also involves pursuing tangible disarmament objectives, especially in the areas of nuclear non-proliferation and the control of conventional arms.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty now ready for signature can be considered one of the historic decisions of this decade. Today, I signed the Treaty on behalf of the Republic of Lithuania. I believe this tangible achievement of humankind should fuel international efforts to take further effective measures towards nuclear disarmament.

A major challenge immediately ahead is the maintenance of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. We must find a key to freeze the production and development of weapons of mass destruction. The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty should set the tone for the disarmament process which will be accompanied by the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. We must cope with new nuclear challenges, such as nuclear leakage, smuggling of fissile materials, failures in nuclear-custody systems and the potential threat of nuclear terrorism.

Moreover, the dangerously widespread use of conventional weapons undermines all attempts at the peaceful solution to conflicts. Sometimes, as in the case

of land-mines, the deadly consequences persist for many years, causing human suffering and resulting in enormous costs. The growing support for banning the production of and trade in anti-personnel land-mines is one way to correct this problem.

Peace and development are closely linked and development is a multifaceted process. Revitalization of the United Nations in economic, social and related fields, and interaction between the United Nations and other multilateral development institutions, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, should be addressed to better structure the Organization for serving peoples' development needs. Sustainable development must be based on participatory democracy and respect for human rights.

Democratization must take hold inside a State and should extend to the international community. The process of democratization cannot be separated from the protection of human rights. We will continue to support United Nations programmes aimed at promoting a democratic culture and at consolidating new or re-established democracies.

Humanitarian assistance efforts face the challenge of responding to humanitarian crises that have increased both in number and complexity. United Nations programmes could complement other initiatives already in place and should be expanded in those fields where collective action is required, such as in comprehensive reconstruction and rehabilitation of war-ravaged areas.

Although the merits of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in facilitating solutions to acute migration problems are evident, some tendencies are cause for concern. The international community needs updated approaches in resolution and prevention policy. The Conference on Refugees and Migrants in the Commonwealth of Independent States and neighbouring countries, held in Geneva in May 1996, was a step towards action on a regional level. We hope that countries will adhere to the Programme of Action, in particular those provisions concerning illegal migration.

We are in favour of strengthening mechanisms to monitor and protect human rights, especially in conflict situations. When these rights are seriously violated despite all efforts to the contrary, we are in favour of turning to judicial recourse. For this reason, we support the creation of an international criminal court for the adjudication of all human rights violations, wherever they may occur.

One of the greatest challenges stymieing the efforts of the international community to ensure sustainable development and democracy is transnational crime. This often takes the form of illicit sales of arms and drugs, illicit trafficking in people, child prostitution and other crimes. No single country is able to cope with well-organized and well-financed criminal structures. We deem that efficient anti-money-laundering measures can be among the best tools to undermine the economic roots of the criminal world.

The window of opportunity for greater international cooperation is wider than at any time since 1945. We must seize the moment if international cooperation is to take a decisive step forward. A reformed and streamlined United Nations, concentrating on the tasks entrusted to it in the Charter, can make considerable progress towards fulfilling the high expectations we place in it today.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, His Excellency Mr. Talbak Nazarov.

Mr. Nazarov (Tajikistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me first to congratulate Mr. Razali Ismail on his election to the post of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. We consider this to constitute recognition by the community of nations of the growing role being played by Malaysia on the world political and economic scenes.

The Republic of Tajikistan's accession to full United Nations membership five years ago marked a new page in the history of my country's relations with the Organization. Five years is, of course, a short period in history, but for our country they have been crucial. For the Tajik people, whose history over the past millennium has been full of tragic events, they were fraught with serious ordeals. These years saw both our breakthrough to sovereignty and one of the most tragic periods of our modern history: the civil war. Indeed, the question was whether one of the newest Member States was to continue to exist on the world map.

The people of Tajikistan answered this question themselves, but the historical cost of the survival of the young State, which became the object of massive aggression from united extremist forces, including attacks carried out from the southern borders of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), was very high.

It is already clear today that the conflict imposed on the Tajik people — an enormous human tragedy — was aimed at undermining the newly emerging foundations of the State and interfering with economic growth and market reforms and hence the country's independent development along a general democratic course. The scale of the conflict and the degree of involvement of forces from the territory of a neighbouring State posed a threat to peace and security on the Asian continent as a whole. Fortunately, in its difficult struggle for political survival, Tajikistan was not left to fend for itself. The CIS States — primarily Russia and the central Asian countries, as well as the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, supported the Republic and continue to do so.

Today, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan is concentrating its efforts on tasks whose successful accomplishment will make it possible to reconstruct the social and economic infrastructure of the southern part of the Republic, which was devastated by the civil war; to reintegrate the disrupted regional sectors of the national economy on a new basis; and to convert the distorted centralized national economy that we inherited into a modern market economy.

These tasks, difficult enough in their own right, are all the more complex because of a chronic shortage of our own financial resources. Thanks to the donor States, the United Nations specialized agencies and other international and regional organizations, Tajikistan continues to receive humanitarian support. The overall volume of the assistance received, however, is insufficient, while the economic situation inside the country continues to be very complicated.

We note with satisfaction that, given these circumstances, authoritative international financial institutions have been understanding about our growing needs. As a result, the Government of Tajikistan, supported by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, is making deliberate efforts to intensify the reforms, create a market economy in the country and integrate the national economy into the world trade and economic system.

A solid basis for progressive and sustainable development is being created in the country step by step. That is why the Government of Tajikistan is particularly interested in the adoption by the General Assembly at this session of decisions dealing with assistance to countries with transitional economies, taking into account the relevant provisions of the Agenda for Development. We also hope that the decisions of the most recent special session of the Commission for Social Development will be fully implemented.

As the Assembly may know, the Commission emphasized once again the necessity for United Nations financial organizations to mobilize resources in support of the national efforts of the developing countries to implement the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. This important Declaration acquires special significance on the eve of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication Poverty (1997-2006).

The stabilization of Tajikistan's economy is not only the key to satisfying the pressing social and economic needs of our people, but would without a doubt promote the process of national conciliation, social consolidation, and the strong and healthy formation of democratic institutions in the country as a whole.

As a post-socialist State at the very beginning of its democratic rejuvenation, the Republic of Tajikistan values highly the international experience it has accumulated within the United Nations. Such experience helps Governments to develop and strengthen new democracies. Drawing upon this rich international experience, my Government is purposefully taking important constitutional steps towards creating an open society. Firmly and consistently committed to the course of democratic development pursued by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Mr. Emomali Rakhmonov, the Government of my country promotes the involvement of the broad mass of the population in social, political and economic reform processes through such mechanisms as referendums, national elections to representative bodies, renovation of the judicial system and every possible encouragement of openness.

An important practical step towards the further democratization of society was taken with the adoption of the treaty on national reconciliation in Tajikistan, initiated by the President and social organizations of the country. This treaty was signed by the leaders of the absolute majority of political parties, public movements, national associations and religious communities. We consider it to be a universal, basic document of national reconciliation that defines viewpoints for the formation of a State providing for the equal and full participation of all political and regional forces in national public life.

The people of Tajikistan made a deliberate choice in favour of democratic reforms and they are not going to give them up voluntarily. However, the course is full of obstacles, which my Government is resolved to overcome in the interests of achieving the main goal: the formation of a civil society.

One of the main problems hampering our building of a new society is an undeclared small war in the far south-east of Tajikistan and on the Tajik-Afghan border, which has been imposed on the Tajik people by the opposition Islamic Revival Movement of Tajikistan. The intransigent armed wing of the opposition is increasing tensions in the country by torpedoing the agreements reached at the inter-Tajik talks. By constantly and flagrantly violating the Tajik-Afghan sector of the southern border of the Commonwealth of Independent States, it is inflicting pain and suffering on the civil population and causing irreparable damage to the unique wildlife of the Pamir region.

The leadership of Tajikistan believes that the road to peace in the country lies through the continuation of dialogue and the resolution of existing differences through constitutional legitimacy and only by political means. The Republic of Tajikistan sincerely appreciates the active humanitarian mediation of the United Nations, which is searching for ways to resolve the conflict peacefully. My Government greatly values the personal contribution made by the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, his Special Representative, Mr. Gerd Merrem, and the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan to the settlement of the conflict.

We greatly appreciate the significant contribution made to the peace process by other international organizations, as well as by the States attending the talks as observers.

In particular I would like to note the constructive role played by the Russian Federation. It has given us significant and considerable assistance in protecting Tajikistan's border and ensuring security in general. We see this assistance as a strategic measure aimed at preventing the southern border of the Tajik part of the CIS from being violated. This task is being carried out by a group of Russian border patrol troops in Tajikistan, comprised for the most part of Tajik youths, and the collective peacekeeping forces with the participation of Uzbekistan, Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan.

It is appropriate to recall that the leadership of Tajikistan and the States whose military contingents are part of the collective peacekeeping forces of the CIS have repeatedly asked that these forces be granted the status of United Nations peacekeeping operation. I do not think this request is any less urgent today.

We are well aware of the fact that the only prerequisite for effective dialogue is the moral willingness of the opposing sides to reach a possible compromise. The Government of Tajikistan has repeatedly demonstrated its good will by trying to meet the other side half-way and to breathe new life into the negotiating process whenever necessary. We will not tire of walking this, the only road to peace. At the same time, we consider the demands made by the opposition for an equal division of power and, particularly, the dismantling of existing State bodies as a condition for national reconciliation to be unrealistic and designed deliberately to lead to deadlock.

The Government of Tajikistan is fully determined logically to finish what it has started and to find a mutually acceptable formula for peace in the country. And if the opposition takes a similarly constructive stance and strictly adheres to the Tehran ceasefire agreement, then there is hope that the Ashgabat agreements will lead to real political results and bring the long-awaited peace to Tajik soil. A striking illustration of this is the agreement reached on 16 September this year between the Government Commission and the opposition's field commanders that brought peace, fragile though it may be, to this long-suffering land.

The efforts of my Government to achieve peace would be even more fruitful were it not for the remaining tensions in neighbouring Afghanistan, where the situation is a humanitarian tragedy of a truly global scale. We would welcome efforts by United Nations Member States to find new ways to settle the conflict in Afghanistan. It is not only our geographical neighbour but also a country linked to Tajikistan by centuries-old historical and spiritual ties. While expressing grave concern at the latest developments in neighbouring Afghanistan, we support the steps taken by the Security Council and the General Assembly aimed at promoting a peaceful resolution of the Afghan conflict.

The Republic of Tajikistan, for its part, is ready to join forces with other members of the international community and contribute to this constructive process,

which may have a positive influence and help stabilize the situation along the Tajik-Afghan border.

From this high rostrum, I cannot but express my gratitude to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for its constructive and fruitful participation in solving a humanitarian problem: that of our refugees who have found themselves in Afghanistan as a result of the civil war. The three-year UNHCR operation in Tajikistan has ended with success. During this comparatively short period of time, with UNHCR assistance in finding a comprehensive solution to this issue, most Tajik refugees have returned to their homeland. With the support of UNHCR, the Government of Tajikistan renovated about 18,000 houses for the returned refugees. Programmes are being implemented, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, to encourage the development of small enterprises, promoting social and economic conditions that can help repatriates gradually to adapt.

The United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization have made great and invaluable contributions to health care and disease prevention for women and children in Tajikistan.

At the same time, we cannot but be concerned for the several thousand Tajik refugees still in Afghanistan. Their return to the homeland is being prevented by the armed opposition, which is linking their return to the resolution of political issues not directly related to this purely humanitarian act. We hope that, with the international community's assistance and the support of the States concerned, a rapid and definitive solution can be found to this major problem.

In this regard, I wish to express our support for the decisions of the Conference on Refugees, Returnees, Displaced Persons and Related Migratory Movements in the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relevant Neighbouring States held in Geneva in late May this year. It is very important that the decisions taken at this session of the General Assembly support the programme of action adopted at the Geneva conference.

We are also concerned at the fact that military training bases of fighters belonging to the armed Tajik opposition continue to operate, without hindrance, on the territory of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, itself a country that has been plagued by civil war for almost two decades.

This is where provocative cross-border sorties are carefully planned and new victims of terror and violence, including among the civilian population, are determined. Nor is it merely armed fighters that cross the Tajik-Afghan border. Beyond Pyandzh, drug manufacturing is out of control and drug trafficking and the sales of drugs to other countries, even to other continents, are consistently on the rise.

Criminal elements and groups from certain regions in Afghanistan illegally circulate arms, thus undermining Tajikistan's State security. It is well known that terrorists of every stripe have always fed off the drug trade and illegal arms sales. We, like other States, are particularly alarmed at the close relationship between some terrorist organizations and the illegal drug trade.

Drug addiction has long been one of the most terrible social scourges on Earth. In Tajikistan, which has become one of the world's "hot spots" in terms of the distribution of drugs coming from outside the country, we understand only too well the danger posed by drug abuse and illegal trafficking to people's lives, health, dignity and economic prosperity, as well as to the political stability of a State.

The consequences of these criminal acts can be felt not just in Tajikistan or the CIS, but far beyond the Commonwealth borders. All this poses a real threat to peace and stability throughout the Central and South Asian region, including Afghanistan.

The Government of Tajikistan expresses its grave concern at terrorist activity around the world. We need a united front to curb the destructive wave of terror and drastically intensify the common struggle to prevent terrorism from emerging in any form. It is particularly necessary to create a reliable barrier against terrorists' attempts to gain access to weapons of mass destruction.

While unconditionally condemning all manifestations of terrorism, the Government of Tajikistan feels that the time has come to turn anti-terrorist cooperation under the auspices of the United Nations to practical action. In this regard, we must make full use of the resources of regional organizations.

During the half a century of its existence, the United Nations has proved its viability; at the same time, however, it has reached the threshold of certain indispensable changes in its structure and activities. We feel that, in today's unstable and transitional international

conditions, the role of the United Nations should steadily grow.

In our opinion, it is important to approach reform in a pragmatic way, concentrate on those issues that are ripe for resolution and maintain a reasonable balance between innovation and those mechanisms that have proved their efficiency. The most important thing is to enhance coordination within the framework of the United Nations; to focus efforts on such priorities as peacemaking, humanitarian crises, human rights, sustainable development and support to States with transitional economies; and to monitor strictly the use of limited available resources.

The Government of Tajikistan feels that the integral element in comprehensive United Nations reform is the question of the further enhancement of the role of the Security Council as the most important instrument for maintaining and strengthening international peace and security. It is also our opinion that the expansion and renewal of the Council must be carried out in keeping with Charter criteria for Council membership and the current status of its permanent members.

We think that the Security Council would be made more representative by adding not only some candidates from among the industrial Powers, such as Germany and Japan, but also some representatives from Asian, African and Latin American countries. In this connection, the proposal made by the delegation of Italy is of great interest.

In the autumn of 1995, when leaving United Nations Headquarters in New York, the leaders of the community of States once again affirmed the determination of their Governments to fight for the realization of our common ideals of peace and development, justice and sovereign equality and respect for human rights and basic freedoms, including the right to development. At that time, we adopted a historic Declaration as a commitment to the present and future generations of the Earth to exert our joint efforts to prevent a resurgence of both cold and hot wars and large-scale and small-scale conflicts in our global world.

This is why we all have a great deal of creative work ahead of us — for the sake of all mankind and for the benefit of the future of our planet Earth.

The President took the Chair.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to make an announcement concerning a change in the programme of work of the General Assembly contained in document A/INF/51/3.

Agenda item 22, entitled, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States"; agenda item 25, entitled, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community"; and agenda item 28, entitled, "Universal Congress on the Panama Canal" will be taken up on Thursday, 24 October 1996, in the afternoon, instead of on Wednesday, 23 October 1996, in the morning, as originally scheduled.

May I also remind members that the General Committee will meet tomorrow, Tuesday, 8 October 1996, at 9.15 a.m. in Conference Room 3, to consider a request for the inclusion of an additional item entitled, "Observer status for the International Seabed Authority", which has been circulated in document A/51/231.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.